

Submitter: Bernadette Niederer

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2138

The Friends of Historic Albany strongly oppose Section 22(1)(f) of HB 2138, which proposes repealing demolition review requirements for houses listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Accelerating demolitions and poorly designed infill buildings were a key factor in the push to create three historic districts in Albany. Subsequently, historic preservation was a key factor in revitalizing Albany's core, strengthening walkable neighborhoods, and supporting sustainable reuse.

Demolition review does not preclude demolition. And, demolition permits do not guarantee missing middle housing. In 2018 the City of Albany permitted the demolition of three historic houses in the Monteith National Register District. The houses were owned by a non-profit and were in use as low-income housing until acquired by a developer. After demolition the property became a vacant lot until 2024, when construction on two apartment buildings with market rate units commenced. As of March 2025, the project is incomplete. Had rehabilitation been the approach of choice, three to six residences for low- to middle-income families could have been returned to the housing market by 2020, before the pandemic shut-down.

If Section 22(1)(f) of HB 2138 remains in place, this story will repeat itself over and over throughout Oregon's established neighborhoods. The primary targets for demolition will be smaller houses and slightly distressed "handyman specials" that have provided an entrée to home ownership for many first-time buyers.

Section 22(1)(f) of HB 2138 is a destructive provision that will harm Oregon's historic resources without guaranteeing the construction of needed housing. The Friends of Historic Albany urge lawmakers to reject this section and instead pursue a balanced and sustainable approach to housing development that respects our past while building for our future.